



VirginiaGreenTravel.org

# 2013 Virginia Green Travel Star Awards

## Green Travel Star



### *Green Bed & Breakfast of the Year*



#### **Oak Grove Plantation Bed & Breakfast**

Oak Grove Plantation Bed & Breakfast has become the first bed and breakfast in the state to install photovoltaic solar panels, both to save on energy and to attract environmentally conscious customers.

Operating for 25 years, the bed and breakfast is blending the old with the new, promoting both the building's 200-year history and the modern potential of measures to protect wildlife and the environment. "I want to encourage guests to install solar power, too," says Pickett Craddock, the innkeeper, whose family has owned the former tobacco plantation during all of its history.

Southern Energy Management of Raleigh, N.C., designed and installed the system, which should produce enough power to account for more than half of the property's total demand. Since their installation last November, the panels more than met this goal during the summer air conditioning season, but fell short in the heating season of colder months.

The 3.9-kilowatt solar array features 16 Bosch 245-watt modules mounted in the field behind Oak Grove's main building. Hooked up to its central heating and air conditioning system with 15 SEER heat pump, the project will allow the bed and breakfast to extend its season beyond the traditional months of May through September.

The project was financed under a unique set of circumstances that also allow Oak Grove to protect the 400 acres of forest surrounding the inn. Its owners are using a Virginia Land Conservation Incentives Act program to preserve the land in perpetuity, a move that made them eligible for tax breaks to make up for the lost property value. Oak Grove then sold the tax breaks and used the proceeds to pay for the solar array.

"Solar is a perfect fit for Oak Grove, and this system will go a long ways towards helping them reach their sustainability goals," SEM Commercial Energy Specialist Evan Bickerstaff said. "This is the first time we've had a client finance their system quite like this, but we'd love to see more businesses do something similar. The idea that land preservation can go hand in hand with a solar installation is absolutely in line with our mission, and that made this project even more impressive."

The solar project was promoted extensively with a media campaign by the innkeeper's husband, Mike Doan, a retired journalist. Articles appeared in Danville and South Boston newspapers, solar and conservation publications, solar energy websites and the Virginia Association of Bed & Breakfasts website. Oak Grove has a silver rating with Trip Advisor's Green Leaders program. In May, the inn hosted a business after-hours event for the South Boston Chamber of Commerce. Several guests commented that the solar panels helped them select Oak Grove as a place to stay. For many reasons, business doubled over the previous season.

Land preservation and solar power aren't the only things Oak Grove Plantation has done to make the property greener. The inn recycles, has a compost pile for vegetable scraps and has installed "low-e" energy-efficient storm windows on the south side. Motorists who arrive in hybrids get a third night free. Also, there is optional linen service and all the laundry on site dries on a clothesline. Rain barrels collect water, the inn has a tankless electric hot water heater, it uses compact fluorescent lighting. In addition, it is handicapped accessible, with a ramp to one bedroom and a handicapped-accessible bathroom.



South Boston Chamber of Commerce after-hours held at Oak Grove



Visit Oak Grove Plantation Bed and Breakfast's Virginia Green profile at:

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